

c. 2.



VOLUNTEERING AND CAREER BUILDING

A Guide for Career Practitioners, Educators, and Volunteer Managers



National Library
of Canada

Bibliothèque nationale
du Canada

VOLUNTEERING AND CAREER BUILDING

A Guide for Career Practitioners, Educators and Volunteer Managers

Published by:

Information Development and Marketing
Career and Labour Market Information
Alberta Advanced Education and Career Development
6th Floor, 9940 - 106 Street
Edmonton, Alberta T5K 2V1
Telephone: (403) 422-1794
Fax: (403) 422-5319

For Additional Copies Please Contact:

Learning Resources Distributing Centre
12360 - 142 Street
Edmonton, Alberta T5L 4X9
Telephone: (403) 427-5775
Fax: (403) 422-9750

Catalogue Item #359316


ISBN 07732-1731-2

© 1998, Her Majesty the Queen in right of the Province of Alberta, as represented by the Minister of
Advanced Education and Career Development.

04/98 - 10 M

.....

Working Together to Build Careers and Communities	3
How Volunteers Make a Difference	5
What Motivates Today's Volunteers	6
Career Practitioners: Facilitating Career Development through Volunteerism	10
Educators: Providing Learning Opportunities through Volunteerism	23
Volunteer Managers: Developing Effective Volunteer Involvement	26
Overcoming Obstacles to Volunteering.....	30
Ethical Volunteer Involvement	33
"Unvolunteering"	35
Working Together to Make a Difference	37
Resources	39
Bibliography	41



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2015

WORKING TOGETHER TO BUILD CAREERS AND COMMUNITIES



hat do career practitioners, educators and volunteer managers have in common? Plenty. Each is concerned with helping individuals grow and develop.

If you belong to one of these three professions you are linked to the others by common needs and issues. You also have resources and opportunities to offer each other. Career practitioners recognize the value of volunteering for providing skills and experience their clients need to get paid work and build their career portfolios. Educators often seek work experience opportunities and practicum placements for their students in the volunteer sector. Career practitioners and educators also value volunteer experience for helping clients/students qualify for scholarships and admission to educational programs. Volunteer managers are involved with helping people grow in non-paying roles for the purpose of community building. At times, members of all three professions may find themselves working with the same clients from different perspectives.

Career Practitioners

Career practitioners work in varied roles and settings to assist individuals of all ages and abilities with career planning, educational planning and job search. Career practitioners help their clients learn more about themselves and the career options available to them and assist them in finding work or overcoming obstacles to desired employment. If you are a career practitioner, this book will help you strengthen the linkages between volunteer opportunities and paid work for your clients.

Educators

Educators value meaningful learning opportunities for students. Volunteering, from structured programs to less formal service situations, can provide many learning experiences. Volunteer activities provide work experience, a chance to practice and

enhance skills, an opportunity to link theory and practice, and a connection to another aspect of society. Volunteering allows students, from kindergarten through post-secondary education, to meet new people and understand different perspectives. If you are an educator interested in learning opportunities for your students through community service experience, practicums, or field placements, this book will help you understand volunteerism from the perspective of the nonprofit organization so that you can make more effective placements.

Volunteer Managers

Volunteer managers are the human resources professionals of volunteerism. They are concerned with finding effective volunteers and helping them to develop. They may have specialized training and/or significant experience in working with people. They understand volunteer motivation, can recruit, select and orient appropriate volunteers for specific roles, and are involved in the supervision, recognition, and evaluation of volunteer staff. If you are a volunteer manager or supervise volunteers, this book will help you enhance your ability to recruit and keep skilled volunteers by better understanding the career building opportunities that motivate some to contribute their services.

The purpose of this book is to show how all three professional groups can better understand each other's needs and perspectives and work together more effectively for the benefit of their clients.

This book also offers suggestions on how partnerships among volunteer managers, educators, and career practitioners can be developed and strengthened to create innovative career building opportunities for their clients. Most sections of the book speak to all three professional groups. There is also a separate section addressed to each.

HOW VOLUNTEERS MAKE A DIFFERENCE



Volunteers are people of all ages and backgrounds who willingly give time, skills, and energy to help others. They are male and female, young and old. They come from all races, all cultures, all income groups, all abilities.

Their contributions create many rewards for the community and the people they assist. The rewards are not always measured in dollars and cents, but in happiness, meaning, friendship, achievement and a variety of other benefits.

When Rick Hansen wheeled around the world, his volunteer effort changed attitudes worldwide about the abilities of people with disabilities. The impact of his "Man in Motion" tour continues today.

Other volunteers share their time to support improved literacy by acting as tutors to adults and children. They help feed and clothe millions, promote peace and justice, develop healthier living conditions, and protect our environment.

The people who worked to ensure the vote for women were volunteers, as were the pioneers from many nations who built schools, libraries, and other community facilities as our country developed. Others have contributed time and skills to improve safety and security through crime prevention and health programs.

When floods and ice storms threaten communities, volunteers haul sandbags and transport, feed, rescue, and raise funds for those affected. In shelters, hospitals and nursing homes, volunteers support residents with care, comfort and compassion.

Volunteer coaches, leaders and instructors provide lifelong learning opportunities. When you enjoy a concert, museum, festival, or play, consider the volunteer commitment invested in the activity.

Wherever they choose to contribute their time and talents, volunteers bring valuable human resources to the people and issues that shape our communities.

WHAT MOTIVATES TODAY'S VOLUNTEERS?

Volunteering has changed significantly as community need and individual lifestyles have changed. The diversity of volunteer opportunities has increased, accommodating many varied skill levels, interests and values. The involvement of volunteers in both nonprofit and public sector activities has also grown more complex.

Volunteers today understand the value of their time, energy, skills and connections. They frequently have many responsibilities, both personal and career-related, so they must make difficult choices about how they use their time. Volunteering is a choice they make among many options.

For many people, volunteering meets a need for altruistic service to others or the community. The opportunity to help others, with no expectation of monetary reward, provides them with meaning and fulfillment. Others hope to contribute their time and skills in exchange for benefits such as educational or career-building opportunities while also meeting the needs of others.

Establishing win/win volunteer experiences

People are more likely to volunteer when the situation is mutually beneficial. The perceived benefits need not be tangible. Issues like convenience, worthiness of the cause, opportunity to meet new people, possibility of career development, and challenge of the role all impact a person's decision to volunteer.

When career building is the motivator, career practitioners, educators and volunteer managers can work together to create win/win experiences. What can volunteers with varying career development needs contribute to the community? How can volunteer opportunities help them in their own career building?

Youth

Young people bring energy, time, and a fresh perspective to their volunteer roles. Their curiosity, creativity and innovation can be assets in problem solving. Their ideals and spirit can lift other people and enhance organizational morale. Youth are searching for acceptance, meaningful roles, a safe place to learn and practice skills, and a chance to make a difference in the world.

Entry level workers

Individuals ready to enter the paid workforce often bring willingness to learn, newly developed skills, training in specialized areas such as technology, new approaches, and a desire to succeed. In return they want to use and practice skills, gain workplace experience, obtain feedback and references, find opportunities to network and participate in additional training.

Career developers

Employers encourage workers to develop experience in areas such as leadership and organizing. They recognize the potential of volunteer roles for gaining these skills. They also acknowledge the value of volunteering for networking and business development. Employees who can manage stress and balance their lifestyle through volunteerism are also an asset to their workplace.

Challenge seekers

Changes to organizational structures have resulted in fewer opportunities for upward mobility in many workplaces. Lateral moves are more common, and many workers are looking for new challenges and interests outside their paid jobs. Volunteering can provide many opportunities to use skills in new ways.

Career changers

Individuals who are changing their occupations bring transferable and specialized skills, motivation, a quest for learning, and often excitement to volunteer activities. Their objectivity can be valuable in providing new ideas and perspectives. They may want opportunities to explore new interests or research possible occupations. They may be searching for bridges to connect them to new career paths. These bridges might be people, skills, or

experience. Volunteering can play a critical role in helping them to reassess values and set new goals.

Forced career changers

Workers who are changing their career path because of downsizing and job loss bring valuable skills and in many cases a wealth of experience to the task. They may appreciate volunteer opportunities that help them maintain or enhance their self-esteem and demonstrate their strengths in a positive and appreciative environment.

Alternative workers

Home-based business people, the self-employed, and virtual and portfolio workers are all without traditional workplaces and employee roles. Many bring entrepreneurial skills, independent thinking, technical skills, and flexible time to volunteer roles. Choosing an alternative work style creates new career development needs. Individuals who work alone may be looking for volunteer roles that meet their social needs. Others seek networking opportunities to enhance their business marketing. Many need flexible schedules and short-term or project-based volunteer commitments. Some are looking for challenge and variety to balance their paid work.

Individuals re-entering the paid workforce

People leave the paid workforce for a variety of reasons including health, parenting, relocation, and furthering their education. People who choose to contribute to family and community life outside the paid workforce provide volunteer organizations with valued skills and significant time and energy. Many people who plan to re-enter the paid workforce need documentation such as references and additions to their résumés to illustrate their accomplishments and skills. They may appreciate volunteer opportunities that help them maintain and enhance skills or learn new ones. Some may see training opportunities, such as upgrading their computer skills, to be a benefit.

The retired and semi-retired

As mature and experienced individuals, retired and semi-retired workers can contribute a wealth of skills, connections, and resources to their volunteer roles. Many bring wisdom and leadership ability. Others share honesty, patience, perspective, and humor. Some have flexible schedules and more time to share. The needs of retired workers vary significantly from person to person. Volunteer roles may provide new activities that match their values and interests, ways to maintain their skills and connections, opportunities for lifelong learning, meaningful ways to share their experience, or a chance to meet needs that paid work once fulfilled.

CAREER PRACTITIONERS:

Facilitating Career Development through Volunteerism



olunteering, when thoughtfully planned, can help develop job skills, add work experience, present networking opportunities, build confidence, and provide practice in self-presentation activities such as interviews. Volunteering can also have important mental, emotional, and physical health benefits for your client. These benefits may be critical during long periods of unemployment or in adjusting to life transitions.

As a career practitioner, you can play an important role by showing clients how to use volunteer experience in their career planning, skill development, and job search. From assessment of client values, interests, and skills to helping develop résumés and career portfolios, you can help career builders customize and focus their volunteer experience to receive the maximum benefit.

You can work more effectively for your client in this endeavor by developing working relationships with volunteer managers.

Preparing and supporting clients in volunteering

Although volunteer experiences will not be the same everywhere, consider the following issues when assisting career builders in finding an appropriate placement.

Selecting the right organization

Help clients understand the operation of organizations that use volunteers so they will better know what to expect. Not all agencies, nonprofit groups and organizations are alike. No two youth clubs, museums, or volunteer centres will provide the same opportunities or support to volunteers. While some groups are part of national organizations, never assume that one local chapter is just like another. For example, YWCAs and YMCAs operate all

around the world, but they offer different programs and services in different kinds of facilities in each community.

Groups and projects that are coordinated entirely by volunteers may have a different “personality” than organizations that are managed by paid staff. They depend more on volunteer leadership, donated services, and member contributions to make things happen. Just as both paid workers and volunteers can manage excellent organizations, so can both operate ineffective, poorly organized groups. Don’t assume that bigger is always better.

Value-added volunteering

Volunteers help themselves while helping others. Volunteering can provide many career-related benefits, such as:

- a means of exploring career options
- a place to learn, maintain, or enhance skills
- a way to develop workplace experience
- a means of meeting new people and expanding personal networks
- activities that support diverse learning styles
- a place to learn multi-tasking and flexibility
- a way to connect theory and practice
- an opportunity to experience a diversity of people and perspectives
- a way to overcome isolation
- opportunities to increase self-esteem

Finding the right opportunity

Successful volunteer opportunities don't happen by chance. They require research into the needs and benefits that the volunteer and the organization bring to the relationship. It is important that the volunteer's hopes and the organization's needs match.

Understand the organization's purpose and what it requires. While volunteers may have innovative ideas, their ambitions may not fit the goals of the group or the needs of its clients. Not all volunteer roles have career development potential. If a placement doesn't seem appropriate, encourage your client to consider other, more suitable opportunities.

Getting involved

Most organizations ask volunteers to go through an application process. Some use application forms and interviews to select individuals whose qualities best match their needs. Interviews also provide opportunities for volunteers to learn more about other needs the organization may have.

Many groups schedule information sessions to introduce their organization and their volunteer needs. An information session is a self-screening tool that allows volunteers to decide for themselves whether the organization or the volunteer opportunities are of interest before applying.

Career builders wishing to volunteer should treat applications, interviews and references for a volunteer position the same way they would for a paid job. Volunteer managers are concerned about finding the most appropriate person for the volunteer role and will be considering many of the same qualities an employer would. Appropriate dress, communication, and presentation are important. Securing volunteer opportunities is good practice for applying for paid positions. Once a client lands a volunteer role, they should be reminded to treat the volunteer workplace and its requirements the same as they would those of a paid job.

Trying out the role

Encourage clients to try out a volunteer role before they agree to a long-term activity. They might ask if it is possible to “shadow” another volunteer doing a similar job. If the role involves a committee, they might ask to sit in on a meeting or two before deciding to take on the job. If the opportunity involves a lot of responsibility, they may want to try a simpler job that helps them prepare for more challenge later. They might also ask to be part of a team or to share a role.

Safety and security

Volunteers are usually asked for references. Prospective volunteers may also be asked to give permission for the organization to contact the police for a criminal check. Organizations have both ethical and legal responsibilities to screen volunteers. Most volunteer groups, especially ones that work with children or other vulnerable people, need to make sure volunteers have no history of inappropriate behaviour.

Volunteers who apply for roles that involve driving others around may be asked to produce a Driver’s Abstract showing their driving history and any traffic offenses they may have committed. This record is available from motor vehicle registration agencies. Volunteer drivers should also discuss who is responsible for insurance when using either their own or an organization’s vehicle.

Volunteers who handle large amounts of money may need to be bondable.

Orientation and training

Most volunteer opportunities begin with an orientation to the job, the people involved, and the resources available. Some roles require additional training that may be provided within the organization. As people grow in their volunteer roles, they may have the opportunity to participate in workshops and other events that build skills and knowledge. Encourage your clients to take advantage of these career building opportunities.

Supervision

New volunteers need to understand their role and know to whom they are accountable. Their supervisor may not be the person who chose them for the job. Often a staff person more directly connected to the activity will supervise. For example, a nurse on a ward may be the supervisor in a hospital setting instead of the volunteer manager. The supervisor may be another volunteer, such as a committee chairperson or the coordinator of a special event. Sometimes volunteers work alone. Sometimes they are asked to lead others.

Understanding the volunteer role, how it fits into the rest of the organization, and the expected outcome will enhance the opportunity for rewarding career development.

Job descriptions, evaluations and references

A written job description is important in clarifying volunteer roles, just as it guides work in a paid job. If a job description is not provided, advise clients to ask for one. It should include a clear description of the role and tasks to be accomplished, the time, support and resources available, to whom the volunteer is accountable, and the potential benefits of the role.

Some organizations provide volunteers with opportunities to be evaluated on their performance. Organizations also use evaluation sessions to gain feedback about their group and ideas about how they can improve volunteer opportunities. A performance review is often informal and should be based on a person's ability to do the job they volunteered to do.

Evaluations may be done with the volunteer coordinator, other volunteers, or staff. In an all-volunteer group, the president of the organization or chairperson of the event or program may be contacted for an evaluation. If a written evaluation is required, it should be discussed at the start as an expectation of the placement.

Workability through volunteering

The ability to get or create and retain work is linked to attitudes, skills, knowledge and opportunity. These “workability” qualities can be learned, practiced, or enhanced through volunteer roles.

Workability qualities include:

Work attitudes — Examples include dependability, honesty/integrity, concern for quality, independence, initiative, commitment to work, willingness to take risks, and courtesy.

Work skills — Examples include the capacity to be adaptable, to communicate well, to negotiate, to build relationships, to make decisions and to solve problems. The ability to manage stress, time, and money is also important. Appropriate dress and appearance, as well as a balanced lifestyle, are fundamental to working successfully.

Work know-how — Required worker qualities include basic skills such as literacy and specialized skills related to the job. Workability know-how also means being able to use learning opportunities and to gain experience, as well as the ability to understand the organization’s operations and work with others.

Work search strategies — Finding rewarding work is connected to the ability to build a vision, develop personal strengths, understand work roles, market yourself, and succeed in interviews.

Adapted from: *Workability Handbook*, Alberta Advanced Education and Career Development, 1996.

Making volunteer experience work for a client

Career practitioners can provide support and follow up in helping clients use their volunteer experience effectively.

Identifying the skills and experience gained

To use volunteer experience for getting paid work or gaining access to educational opportunities, career builders need to identify the skills they learned or used and the experience they gained. When including volunteer experience in applications, clients should:

1. Create a name for the volunteer role.
2. Use the same language a prospective employer would use.
3. Emphasize workability skills.
4. Demonstrate abilities through examples.
5. Describe the outcomes of the volunteer activity. What was gained by the organization and by the volunteer?
6. Relate the experience to the job or educational program they are seeking.



Brett thought about the high school reunion he helped to organize. He described his role this way:

Special Event Coordinator

- *formed a committee to organize the event*
- *negotiated with businesses for donated food, entertainment, and facilities*
- *arranged publicity including posters and newspaper announcements*
- *coordinated the other volunteers who assisted*

Accomplishment/ success: *Planned and coordinated three-day event attended by 300 people. Displays, meals, and social events were effective and within budget.*

Volunteering as a career planning activity

The word *career* describes the combination of activities people choose in life. These include paid work, education, leisure, volunteer activity, and family life. *Career planning* focuses on knowing yourself, discovering the many opportunities life presents, and choosing directions that fit for you.

Most career planning involves five steps. Volunteering can be an effective tool in each:

- **Self-exploration:** Volunteering provides opportunities to clarify values, explore interests, and assess skills.
- **Generating ideas:** Volunteering may help people making career changes to identify new occupational possibilities.
- **Occupational exploration:** Volunteering offers settings where people can learn more about occupations and work alternatives.
- **Making decisions:** Volunteering can provide people with information about themselves and their world to help them make career decisions.
- **Taking action:** Volunteering can be an effective bridge to new career paths.

Using volunteer experience on résumés and in portfolios

Volunteers should include relevant volunteer experience in their résumés and portfolios.

Appropriate volunteer roles listed on a résumé show that the person:

- has skills that are useful in the workplace.
- manages time well
- works well with other people
- has a positive attitude

Your client should identify the transferable and specialized skills used and give specific examples that show the relationship between the volunteer role and the paid job desired.



Marla used volunteer experience on her résumé to demonstrate her job-related skills and experience. She hoped to find employment as a display designer in a retail business.

Related Volunteer Experience

- displayed Alberta crafted pottery and quilts at provincial exhibit
Aspenridge Museum (summer 1997)
- designed window displays and seasonal theme area
International Gift & Craft Bazaar (October to December 1997)
- coordinated signage for craft exhibit and historic displays
Mountainview Rodeo and Fair (July 1994, 95, 96)
- worked with school volunteers to create monthly mall exhibit of student work
Aspen Heights High School (fall 1995 to spring 1998)



Andy used his volunteer activities to show prospective employers in the construction industry that he is dependable, manages his time well, and gets along with other people.

Related Volunteer Work

- encouraged team work and organized events as a track coach
Bedford Community Centre (fall 1994 to summer 1997)
- coordinated insulating crew on housing project
Habitat for Humanity (summer 1997)
- installed signs for cross country ski trails
Smith Hills Nature Centre (fall 1998)



Terese put samples of computer-assisted design work in her portfolio to demonstrate her technical skills. Although she did not have much paid job experience, she was able to demonstrate her ability through the work she did as a volunteer drafting plans for a new entrance to the youth shelter. She also mentioned this work in her cover letter when she applied for a job in an architectural firm.

Networking to assist in job search and career building

Every new person a volunteer meets is a potential lead to new career or learning opportunities. These contacts may have ideas or other contacts to offer. Think about who your client met while volunteering: staff, board members, other volunteers. Who did they work with? Committees? Other organizations? Suppliers? Clients?



Porter is interested in working with animals. He hopes to get more education but isn't sure what program to take. He wants to gain more on-the-job experience while going to school. He adds to his network through volunteering. His networking list looks like this:

West Plains 4H Club

- Jack Carter, advisor (will discuss agronomy careers)
- Sandra Preston, leader (needs new volunteer leader next year)

Greenridge Animal Shelter

- Kristine James, coordinator (hires casual staff)
- Jim Samson, volunteer manager (looking for weekend animal care volunteers)
- Dr. Andrea Smith, veterinarian (willing to discuss animal health care careers)

"Take Flight" Bird Banding Project

- Peter Vriend, biologist and project director (will discuss careers in wildlife biology)
 - Jackie Schmidt, board member (can help me meet other people interested in birding)
-

More tips for career practitioners

Prepare clients by using assessment activities that identify their values, interests, skills and personal goals. The more a volunteer manager knows about an individual the better able they will be to help the person find a rewarding experience. For example, a volunteer who indicates an interest in working with things rather than people and has carpentry skills may find more rewards in restoring furniture than teaching woodworking to children.

Help clients assess the suitability of volunteer opportunities they pursue. Although many organizations need volunteer help, not all are able to provide the structure or experiences required for effective career development. For example, an organization that is very informal, in transition, or in crisis may not be a suitable placement for your client. Career builders will likely experience more success in organizations that have a history of successfully involving volunteers. Such organizations have a positive attitude, clearly defined policies and procedures, and the capacity to lead volunteers appropriately.

Encourage prospective volunteers to find out if their own beliefs match those of the group seeking volunteer assistance. A volunteer who values feminist approaches to counselling will feel more comfortable in a like-minded group. A camp or youth group sponsored by a particular religious organization may not fit the beliefs of all volunteers.

Help clients define the volunteer experiences or outcomes they want. Encourage them to discuss their needs with the organization. Clear expectations help the volunteer manager better meet the volunteer's needs.

Be realistic about what can be accomplished through volunteer experience. Setting overly high goals can sometimes create unrealistic expectations. While volunteering can provide many career building opportunities, it is not a substitute for formal education or appropriate life skills. Gaining valuable skills and experience requires an investment of time and energy. Short-term volunteer roles are unlikely to provide this kind of benefit.

Likewise, a volunteer with inappropriate skills will not be assigned to a role just because they want to get experience. For example, a volunteer wanting experience in a medical environment will not be used directly in medical procedures. However, there are many other volunteer roles available in a hospital setting that can provide useful experience.

Consider the cost/benefit of involving volunteers in short-term activities – both to the volunteer and to the organization.

A volunteer who is looking for work experience to document on a résumé will not benefit greatly from a series of unrelated one-day assignments. However, someone wanting to job shadow several occupations may find such assignments helpful. From the organization's point of view, the effort to organize a short-term opportunity may outweigh the benefits. Most structured volunteer programs require screening, placement, orientation, and supervision. While the experience may help your client, it may be costly to the volunteer organization and disruptive to the people they serve. Discuss activities that will be mutually beneficial.

Prepare clients for the possibility that they may not immediately find a suitable volunteer opportunity.

Many nonprofit organizations, especially those that are well known, have more prospective volunteers than they are able to accommodate. Most volunteer managers will provide referrals to other organizations that may be able to use your client's talents to their mutual benefit.

Consider your client's suitability to volunteer in a particular organization. Think about the issues that influence their behaviour and their ability to contribute or help others. Individuals who are in crisis or involved in a rehabilitation or healing process may not be suitable for some roles. While they may eventually be able to contribute, taking on extra responsibility in a challenging volunteer role may not be appropriate at the time. For example, a person in treatment for substance abuse may want to work in a youth program to prevent drug abuse. Another kind of volunteer role would be better suited to the volunteer's current needs. Many individuals do not have the self-awareness to assess their own readiness. Save them the stress and embarrassment of not being accepted by helping them consider these issues.

Research the best times to involve clients in specific activities.

Some groups have a year-round need for volunteers to fill varied roles. Others are involved in seasonal activities. For example, many groups are overwhelmed with help at Christmas but could better use the support at other times of the year.

Stress with your client that reliability, loyalty, and commitment are all important workability issues in paid and volunteer roles.

Organizations depend on their volunteers to be committed and reliable. They plan around the time, skills, and support that volunteers have agreed to contribute. For example, the dependability of a volunteer who agrees to lead a museum tour of school children at a specific time is very important to the success of the field trip, the children's educational experience, and the reputation of the facility.

Encourage volunteers to reflect on their experiences. What did they learn? What skills did they develop, practice or enhance? Did they discover anything about themselves? How did they relate to other people? Who did they meet? How can they connect the volunteer experience with their career planning, education or job search?

Encourage a spirit of giving. Career builders who approach volunteering with this attitude will be welcomed in most organizations.

EDUCATORS:

Developing Learning Opportunities through Volunteerism



Teachers, instructors, and other educators play an important role in providing opportunities to learn values related to sharing and giving. They are also involved in skill development, exploration, and other learning activities that contribute to career development. Appropriate, well planned volunteer involvement can provide educational opportunities related to community service and career development.

Developing meaningful volunteer experiences for students, while also meeting real community needs, can be a challenge. You can be more effective in this role by establishing links with volunteer managers and identifying ways you can work together for mutual benefit.

More tips for educators

Clearly define the goals of volunteer involvement. Students, teachers/instructors, and volunteer managers need to clearly understand the goals, expectations and desired outcomes of the volunteer experience. Their discussion should include not only learning opportunities, but also time commitment, required resources, and responsibilities.

Plan ahead for volunteer activities that involve external organizations. Most organizations that use volunteers need at least a month to plan for volunteer experiences that are mutually beneficial. Lead time is essential to identify and develop meaningful roles for volunteers and to ensure that orientation, supervision, and other issues have been considered. Longer-term placements, like practicums, may require much longer time lines. Are you looking for a volunteer experience that involves individual placements, small groups, or all of your students? Each requires different considerations for a volunteer manager.

Be prepared to promote the benefits of involving your students.

Volunteer centres may be able to provide you with ideas for service work, but it is up to you and your students to negotiate with specific organizations. Volunteer managers are looking for win/win volunteer opportunities. Involve well-prepared students in the research and in making contacts. They will be more committed to opportunities they helped to develop.

Learn from the field placement experience of other teachers and instructors.

Ask them for tips and contacts. Volunteer centres and agencies appreciate your interest, but do not have time to work with every educator, every year.

Consider the time, safety, cost, transportation and other issues related to volunteer opportunities.

Parental consent will be required for volunteers under 18 years of age.

Prepare students for the possibility of security checks.

Organizations that work with vulnerable people such as children or frail adults must screen their volunteers. This is both legally and ethically necessary and includes a police criminal check. Police checks can take several weeks to complete and there may costs to the organization or the volunteer. This is one reason why short-term volunteer efforts that do not benefit an organization significantly are usually discouraged.

Visit the site in advance so that you know what to expect.

Prepare students for the environment, people and issues they will meet in their volunteer role.

Ensure that adequate supervision by your school is available for group volunteer projects.

Get parent volunteers or other staff to help. Volunteer managers or other agency workers will assist you in orientation and supervision but cannot be expected to deal with issues such as discipline problems.

Explain to students that confidentiality is an important aspect of volunteering in human service and health care settings.

Communicate with the volunteer manager on a regular basis to monitor student progress. Discuss the appropriateness of the placement and any adjustments that need to be made. Make suggestions that would enhance the student's experience. Work with the volunteer manager and student(s) to evaluate the experience.

Help students select volunteer experiences that fit their interests, values, and goals. They will be more committed to their volunteer roles if the work has meaning for them. Many young people continue volunteering in roles initiated through educational programs when the role has been carefully matched to their individual needs.

Consider the purpose and goals of the experience when deciding the kind of organization to approach for a student placement. For example a fast food restaurant and a nursing home both offer skill development opportunities, but the nursing home may better help students understand voluntary commitment.

Also see **More tips for career practitioners.** Educators and career practitioners have many common concerns in helping clients/students select appropriate volunteer roles.

VOLUNTEER MANAGERS:

Developing Effective Volunteer Involvement



olunteer managers have an important opportunity to build a strong volunteer program while helping individuals with their career development. Many prospective volunteers are motivated by the career building potential of volunteering. They offer valuable skills, time, energy and commitment in return for opportunities to learn, explore, challenge themselves, and make connections that will help them build their careers. They can often provide specialized expertise or new contacts for your organization.

You can involve a wider range of volunteer support by ensuring that your volunteer program includes effective volunteer development opportunities, recruitment, screening, placement, supervision, recognition, and evaluation to help volunteers achieve their career building goals.

Make connections and network regularly with career practitioners and educators who may be interested in placing clients or students in a volunteer role that offers career building opportunities.

More tips for volunteer managers

Consider career development issues when designing volunteer roles. For example, describe possible career benefits in recruitment messages and volunteer job descriptions. Consider designing diverse opportunities within your organization.

Think from the perspective of mutual benefit. Who has the qualities that your organization needs? What opportunities can you provide in exchange for volunteer service? For example, a person who uses organizational skills in project management may be able to help plan a large special event in return for the opportunity to develop leadership skills.

Be prepared to create new volunteer roles if a mutually beneficial opportunity arises. However, don't be tempted to design new positions for gifted or interesting individuals if the role does not contribute to the goals of your organization. For example, a person who wants to use their talent to design a brochure for an organization that does not use print information may be better suited to another role.

Develop clear and complete job descriptions. Include an overview of responsibilities, tasks to be done, skills required, resources available, evaluation criteria to be used, and supervision and accountability issues. A detailed job description helps both the career builder and the volunteer manager to better clarify expectations.

Clarify the needs and expectations of volunteers early in the relationship. Explore their interests, skills, values, and the amount of challenge they are seeking. Are there particular roles or experiences that would help them meet career needs? Don't assume that because they have skills and experience in a particular field they want to use those skills in their volunteer role. For example, an accountant may not be interested in a role as a volunteer treasurer or in auditing records.

Research the best way to involve students or other volunteers with specific skills. Does your volunteer opportunity connect with their curriculum? Does it test or challenge their skills? Could it be used for credit? How will your request fit with their study schedule? Talk with teachers and instructors about how you can develop win/win volunteer projects.

Be clear about your organization's policy on providing references. Are you willing to give a detailed reference for a job well done, or are you only able to confirm the tasks the volunteer undertook and the time commitment made? Perhaps the size and scope of your organization does not allow for references at all. If you do provide references, help volunteers understand that, as in paid employment, positive references are earned through commitment and effort.

Be prepared to evaluate volunteer performance. Evaluation is an important part of recognition and motivation. Career builders will want feedback and written evaluations on longer-term projects or activities. A positive, relevant evaluation may be included in the portfolio of a person looking for paid work. It may also help a volunteer select appropriate training or make career-related choices.

Consider the needs of volunteers involved in job search. Most job seekers require time to look for work, apply for jobs, customize résumés and cover letters, and attend interviews. While your organization is important, job search is likely to be a higher priority for most people. Try to provide some flexibility in placements while clearly defining your organization's needs and expectations in regard to commitment. Short-term or flexible assignments are more likely to be completed than time-sensitive, long-term tasks. Consider assigning job searchers to project-based work without rigid deadlines or let them job share a position that requires regular attention.

Help volunteers meet new people and experience varied perspectives. Networking, understanding various roles and responsibilities, and experiencing the overall workplace environment are all important for career building. For example, asking a volunteer to serve on a committee provides them a chance to meet other committee members who can offer advice, opportunities or feedback.

Consider the emotional needs of volunteers who are unemployed or experiencing major life transitions. Be positive, supportive, and encouraging. Many job searchers have experienced feelings of rejection and low self worth. Some who are in a period of change or transition may feel anger, sadness, or loss. Volunteering can play a significant role in helping people maintain or enhance their self-esteem. For example, a person who has lost a job through downsizing might choose to volunteer to maintain skills and confidence in an appreciative environment.

Recognize the need for orientation, training, and developmental opportunities. Valued volunteers are usually developed over time. Consider how orientation, training and other developmental opportunities will enhance the volunteer's career as well as your organization's ability to provide service. A volunteer who enters an organization in a particular role may want new opportunities as they grow and develop. Lifestyle changes may create new needs and capabilities. For example, a volunteer who has become a new parent may welcome a different volunteer challenge. How can you prepare new volunteers to work to their potential? How can you build learning opportunities into regular activities? How can you expand, develop, or challenge volunteers through additional training?

Make sure educational institutions and career practitioners are aware of your organization and its volunteer needs. Most would welcome hearing from you. They might also be interested in exploring your organization's volunteer opportunities with their students/clients.

OVERCOMING OBSTACLES TO VOLUNTEERING



While volunteering is usually seen as a free activity anybody can do, it's not that simple. Barriers can prevent many people from enjoying the benefits of volunteering. Some common barriers and ways career practitioners, educators and volunteer managers can counter them are:

Attitude

Why should I volunteer? What's in it for me? Many people view volunteering simply as working for free. They see volunteering as being taken advantage of or think it foolish that someone would assist without financial reward. Others perceive volunteering to be a "do-gooder" activity.

Counter — *Demonstrate the personal benefits an individual might receive from volunteering. Connect volunteering to career building. Illustrate the concept of mutual benefit or describe the relationship as an exchange or trade. Discuss how the person may have been assisted in the past by volunteers. Helping others may not be a motivator at the start, but a satisfying volunteer opportunity may encourage volunteering for more altruistic reasons in the future.*

Gender

Many people assume volunteering is primarily a female activity. Although historically this may have been true, men volunteer in all aspects of community life, from the arts and social service to sports and religious service. While women aged 35 to 45 who work outside the home continue to volunteer at the highest rate in Canada, male volunteers also contribute significantly.

Counter — *You can help a prospective male volunteer feel more comfortable by directly linking their skills and interests with related volunteer roles. Discuss examples of men volunteering and male volunteer role models they respect. Consider their motivation and create opportunities to meet their career building needs.*

Culture

Volunteering is not a universally understood concept in all cultures, so you can't assume that all clients will value the concept of volunteering. In many cultures, people care only for their own families. In others, helping is connected to religious beliefs and would never be discussed openly. Among some people, volunteering is a term connected with enforced political activity and does not have any connection to altruism.

Counter — *Learn about the beliefs and values of prospective volunteers. Take time to explore their previous experiences with volunteering. If individuals are confused about what volunteering means, it is easy for them to be taken advantage of through misunderstanding. Help new volunteers understand their rights and responsibilities.*

Economic barriers

Although volunteering is often promoted as a free activity, many financial barriers prevent people from participating. The most obvious is that many people can't afford to give time and energy without being paid. For others, associated costs such as bus fare, child care, parking, supplies, appropriate clothing, or meals may prevent them from choosing the volunteer role which best meets their needs. Some volunteers drop out because of hidden costs such as activity fees related to their role or pressure to be involved in events that they cannot afford. Many volunteers motivated by career building are unemployed, poorly paid, or unaware of ways volunteer groups can reduce financial barriers.

Counter — *Organizations that involve volunteers can reduce economic barriers to volunteering by:*

- *subsidizing or paying transportation or parking costs*
- *subsidizing or providing child care or helping to coordinate child care co-ops*
- *providing free refreshments or meals during volunteer activities*
- *lending or providing specialized equipment or clothing*
- *considering flexible schedules that allow volunteers to use time and resources in ways that meet their needs*

- *being sensitive to volunteers' needs to commit time to paid employment, even if they don't work at a regular full-time jobs*
- *considering volunteer activities that can be done in locations that may be more convenient to volunteers*

If volunteering is seen as a career building strategy for the future, individuals may see costs as investments not expenses.

Special needs/disabilities

Volunteering has the potential to be one of the most inclusive activities in community life. Everyone has the ability to give in their own way. Many organizations successfully involve a diverse group of volunteers with differing abilities. However, physical, emotional, and social barriers often prevent individuals from fully participating as volunteers.

Counter – *Organizations can make volunteer opportunities more accessible to people with different abilities by:*

- *developing a wide range of volunteer positions that use the special qualities each volunteer brings*
- *taking into account accessibility of the facility, scheduling, and resources that make volunteering easier*
- *discussing volunteers' interests, skills, and hopes before placing them*
- *discussing with volunteers any special supporting resources they may require and the responsibilities each party assumes for providing them*

ETHICAL VOLUNTEER INVOLVEMENT



Volunteering is generally understood to mean service given freely for public or community good. It implies choice and charitable giving. Ethical volunteering means fair exchange of non-monetary benefits for volunteer service. These benefits often relate to opportunities to help others, to be involved in meaningful activity, to use or gain skills, to connect with other people, and to gain valued experience.

Public, private, and nonprofit employers all have the potential to provide work experience to career builders. However, organizations with volunteer programs add the dimension of community service, altruism, and citizenship responsibility.

In nonprofit organizations

The accepted role of volunteers in charitable and other nonprofit organizations is to enrich, expand or support the group's work. In some organizations volunteers lead and manage core activities, sometimes supported by paid staff. For example, in a nonprofit support group, museum or art gallery, volunteers might govern and manage the operation but hire custodial staff to maintain the building. In other organizations, volunteers support the activities of paid staff. In a health care setting volunteers assist professional paid staff in enhancing quality of life for patients.

In a business setting

A business employer may offer work experience to a student without pay, but provide other tangible learning and career development benefits. The role may be mutually beneficial, ethical and positive, although it would not be considered volunteering in the traditional sense.

Ethical use of volunteers does not include individuals being pressured to work for free in a business or other profit-seeking activity without mutual benefit, or in exchange for possible future employment.

Individuals who feel that the work they have been asked to do is not an appropriate volunteer role, or that they have been treated inappropriately should be advised to:

- discuss the issue with a trusted friend, teacher/instructor, or career practitioner
- review their concerns with the person supervising the role
- leave the organization with a written explanation of their concern
- report the situation to an appropriate human rights or employment-related government area.

"UNVOLUNTEERING"



ome organizations and activities may not meet a volunteer's expectations. If volunteers are unhappy in their role, feel discouraged about the workload, or are having difficulty with other people, they may feel frustrated. Likewise, the organization may find that a volunteer is not appropriate for a particular role.

Reasons for volunteer dissatisfaction might include:

- The volunteer role takes too much time or interferes with other activities.
- The schedule is inconvenient.
- The role is boring, too challenging, or too big.
- The volunteer hasn't received appropriate training, support or supervision.
- The volunteer doesn't share interests or values with the organization.
- The volunteer doesn't feel needed or appreciated.

The volunteer and the volunteer manager can often deal with these challenges by adapting, changing, or negotiating different arrangements. Working out a solution gives the volunteer a chance to exercise problem solving skills that will also be an asset in paid work.

If the volunteer is unable to work with the organization to improve the situation, leaving may be the best solution. While volunteering requires patience and commitment, it is the volunteer's decision to choose where to contribute his or her time, energy, and skills.

If you are a career practitioner or an educator, and a client or student chooses to leave a volunteer position, advise them to:

- give the organization advance notice that they are unable to complete their commitment. Reliability and communication are important.

- let an appropriate person in the group know why they will not be continuing.
- put their resignation in the form of a short letter directed to the volunteer manager or another person supervising the position. They should keep the letter brief and factual and describe their personal experiences — the organization needs to know how it can improve conditions for future volunteers. They must be careful not to criticize or focus on the negative – the person may be a future employer or co-worker.
- consider other groups, other roles, other times. What did they learn from the experience? What would they do differently as a result?

A volunteer manager or other supervisor may need to remove a volunteer from a particular role or ask them to leave the organization. Most organizations have policies and procedures regarding volunteer dismissal. Like the volunteer's right to choose a rewarding opportunity, the organization also has the right to choose the most appropriate person for the role. The perception that you cannot "fire" a volunteer is not generally held by most organizations.

WORKING TOGETHER TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE



Cooperation among career practitioners, educators, and volunteer managers can produce significant benefits for all involved. The following are some of the ways they can better understand each other and work together.

Compare assets, needs and goals to identify projects that could be developed together. For example, a career practitioner working with an immigrant employment program might collaborate with a volunteer manager in a youth serving agency to undertake a group volunteer project. This approach might help clients feel more comfortable volunteering as individuals later.

Try working together when a prospective volunteer has special needs they may not be able to define for themselves or when they need an advocate.

Consider shared professional development that would create awareness of each other's perspectives and challenges. For example, career practitioners and/or educators might present a session at a conference for nonprofit/voluntary organizations, or a volunteer manager might be a guest speaker at a professional development day for teachers.

Develop information that creates awareness of career/volunteer-related issues. For example, a college could provide a summary of programs that incorporate practicums or projects to organizations that use volunteers. A school district could develop a summary of volunteer-related curriculum issues from K through 12 so volunteer managers can learn more about student needs. An organization such as a museum, health care centre or recreation facility that welcomes volunteers might invite educators from neighborhood schools to an information session.

Access resources and learning opportunities from other disciplines to understand other perspectives.

Recognize the goals, needs, abilities, limits, and perspectives of other “helping” professions.

Whether you are a career practitioner, an educator, or a volunteer manager, you can make a difference to individuals who are developing careers. When you work together to prepare career builders for volunteering and volunteer opportunities for career builders everybody wins. As you create opportunities for individuals to explore, learn, contribute and grow through volunteering, you build people, careers and communities. Be a catalyst. Be a developer. Make a difference.

RESOURCES

Resource Centre for Voluntary Organizations (RCVO)

The Resource Centre for Voluntary Organizations is a source of information and resource materials related to the voluntary/nonprofit sector. A free, province-wide service, RCVO can provide information on Volunteer Management through books, periodicals, audio and video tapes, workshops and consultation.

Resource Centre for Voluntary Organizations
Grant MacEwan Community College
5 - 132, 10700 - 104 Avenue
Edmonton, Alberta T5J 4S2
(403)497-5616
e-mail: Spiessk@admin.gmcc.ab.ca
Robertsonl@admin.gmcc.ab.ca

Volunteer Alberta

Volunteer Alberta is a nonprofit association that promotes volunteerism throughout Alberta.

Volunteer Alberta
900, 640 - 8th Avenue S.W.
Calgary, Alberta T2P 1G7
(403)231-1449

The following volunteer centres are members of Volunteer Alberta and can provide information about volunteer opportunities in their communities.

Volunteer Centre of Calgary
900, 640 - 8th Avenue S.W.
Calgary, Alberta T2P 1G7
(403)265-5633

Camrose and District Volunteer
Action Centre
6218 - 48 Avenue
Camrose, Alberta T4V 0K6
(403)672-0141

Volunteer Centre of Edmonton
302, 11456 - Jasper Avenue
Edmonton, Alberta T5K 0M1
(403)482-6431

Volunteer Action Centre
Box 6183
Fort McMurray, Alberta T9H 4W1
(403)790-2326

Volunteer Centre of Fort
Saskatchewan
10005 - 102 Street
Fort Saskatchewan, Alberta
T8L 2C5
(403)992-6200

Volunteer Services Bureau
9813 - 116 Avenue
Grande Prairie, Alberta T8V 4B4
(403)539-5986

Volunteer and Information Centre
c/o Town of Hinton F.C.S.S.
813 Switzer Drive
Hinton, Alberta T7V 1V1
(403)865-6060

Community Volunteer Centre
207 - 13 Street North
Lethbridge, Alberta T1H 2R6
(403)320-2044

Red Deer Volunteer and
Information Centre
4935 - 51 Street
Red Deer, Alberta T4N 2A8
(403)342-1243

Community Information and
Volunteer Centre
50 Sir Winston Churchill Avenue
St. Albert, Alberta T8N 0G4
(403)459-6666

Information and Volunteer Centre
for Strathcona County
100 Ordze Avenue
Sherwood Park, Alberta T8B 1M6
(403)464-4242

Stettler and District Volunteer
Centre
Box 2097
Stettler, Alberta T0C 2L0
(403)742-2337

Stony Plain Community
Information and Volunteer Centre
4912 - 51 Avenue
Stony Plain, Alberta T7Z 1S4
(403)963-9770

Volunteer Centre of Wetaskiwin
5010 - 50 Avenue
Wetaskiwin, Alberta T9A 0S4
(403)352-6023

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Adolph, Valerie and Ahwee, Valerie, ***Making a Difference: A Guide to Volunteering for Canadian Youth***, Summerhill Press, Toronto, 1990 (ISBN 0-929091-17-5)

Alberta Career Development and Employment, ***Volunteerism: Building Futures***, Government of Alberta, 1988 (ISBN 0-7732-0178-5)

Ellis, Susan J., ***The Volunteer Recruitment Book***, Energize Inc., Philadelphia, 1994 (ISBN 0-940576-15-5)

Henderson, Kathy, ***What Would We Do Without You? A Guide to Volunteer Activities for Kids***, Betterway Publications, Crozet, VA, 1990 (ISBN 1-55870-152-4)

Lloyd, Claire, ***Teen Power! How to Develop A Teen Volunteer Program***, Volunteer Centre of Toronto, 1988 (ISBN 0-921506-02-3)

Points of Light Foundation, ***Everyone Wins When Youth Serve: Building Agency / School Partnerships for Service Learning***, Points of Light Foundation, Washington, D.C.

Street, Lorraine, ***Volunteering for Work Experience: Developing and Maintaining Employment Skills Through Volunteer Work***, Voluntary Action Directorate, Canadian Heritage, Ottawa, 1994 (ISBN 0-662-22221-0)

We'd Like to Hear From You...

VOLUNTEERING AND CAREER BUILDING

A Guide for Career Practitioners, Educators and Volunteer Managers

Did you find the information in this publication useful? _____

In what way?

How could we improve it?

Do you have any suggestions for other products that would be of value to you?

Would You Like to Receive a Catalogue of Our Products?

Name _____

Address _____

_____ Postal Code _____

Phone _____ FAX _____

Please Return this Form to

Information Development and Marketing

Career and Labour Market Information

Alberta Advanced Education and Career Development

6th floor, 9940 - 106 Street, Edmonton, AB T5K 2V1

Phone (403)422-1794 FAX (403)422-5319

National Library of Canada
Bibliothèque nationale du Canada



3 3286 51683 7784